

# Center News



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A Newsletter for Federal Child Care Centers

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## New Orleans Child Care Center Re-opens After Hurricane Katrina

After being closed for nearly six weeks following Hurricane Katrina, Castle Kids Child Development Center Center at the New Orleans District Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), re-opened its doors on October 17, more than one month ahead of schedule. Randy Florent, District childcare coordinator for the Corp and Lt. Col. Murray Starkel cut the ribbon to officially re-open the center. "Randy agreed to get the center opened again by mid-November and with heroic and Herculean measures he beat that estimate by nearly a month," Starkel said. According to Mr. Florent, the building sustained minimal damage, and nothing serious enough to keep the kids from returning to the facility. "We still have some repairs to do, but we can do them without inconveniencing any of our employees and their youngsters."

At time of re-opening there were only 9 staff members available to work. Most were living in hotels or waiting for trailers from FEMA. The director, Roxann Parker commutes from Baton Rouge each day where she is living in a hotel with her two young daughters. Currently there are 27 children attending the center, all Army Corps of Engineers families. On November 7, Castle Kids opened its doors to all federal families needing care for their children. Castle Kids also plans to re-open the center to the community on November 21, but only to those who were using the facility before the disaster. The center plans to hold off on enrolling new children until January 2006.

The NAEYC accredited center is managed by the YMCA of Greater New Orleans, and all the staff were severely affected by the disaster. Many are scattered from Florida to Texas and several of them have already let Roxann know that they will not be returning to New Orleans. Under the best of circumstances, Roxann expects to get back about 50% of her staff. Prior to the storm the center was operating at near capacity of 100 children. However, for those staff and families that have returned, thanks to the efforts of Lt. Starkel, Randy Florent and all the others that assisted in getting the center up and running, they were able to return to a safe, healthy environment in which to work and learn, and for that we are all thankful.



*R to L Randy Florent, Child Care Coordinator, COE, Angela Duncan, COE, Associate Child Care Coordinator, Roxann Parker, Center Director, Melissa Dedual, Head Teacher, LTC Murray Starkel, Deputy Commander, and three Castle Kids, John, Austin and Ian. Hidden by LTC Starkel is Connie Greenlee, Assistant Center Director.*

## Ania's Angle



### The Significance of Light

To quote Wurtman: "It seems clear that light is the most important environmental input after food in controlling bodily functions".

Light is crucial for biological reasons, and not only for proper vision. There is evidence that light penetrates the skin and the skull to activate photoelectric cells. Humans, who originated in the subtropics have genetic memory and need to be attuned to high level of light. Biologically, sudden exposure to light stimulates the adrenal gland. Psychologically we need the benevolent rays of the sun. Medicine used light therapy to cure tuberculosis, psoriasis, and many other disorders and ultraviolet light is well known in treating seasonal depression and sleep disorders to name a few. Remember the Vitamin D deficiency that produced rickets in children?

It is no surprise research shows that children are especially affected in their developmental needs by the quantity and quality of the light to which they are exposed. Quality of light is determined by the length of day, intensity of light and COLOR, more than temperature and moisture. For instance, in an environment with low light and all blank walls, a sense of boredom, spatial confusion and loss of interest or attention, neuroses, ulcers or depression could occur. For a normal healthy life and stimulation of the senses we need properly balanced light, like that of the sun – a full spectrum light source.

However, in today's modern age we spend our days in mostly man made environments with man made light. The sun's light is balanced light with a wide range of wavelengths and frequencies. Each "octave" has a certain need and purpose. Complete spectrum sunlight is 60 or 70 octaves and emits energy from infrared through visible light to ultraviolet light.

As we know artificial light cannot substitute for the quality of natural light. However when artificial lighting is needed to enhance natural lighting, it should include energy efficient, full-spectrum lighting utilizing a variety of fixture and lighting types with high color rendition with the capability of being dimmed. Fluorescent lighting sources should utilize electronic ballast with high frequency cycles that avoid perceptible flickering and allow dimming. The day lighting strategy used in the building design should achieve a minimum Daylight Factor (DF) of 2% in 75% of relevant spaces. Exterior windows require window treatment to control direct sunlight. (For *specific technical requirements related to windows and daylighting*, see *Child Care Design Guide*, section 10.7.)

We know that concentration and work output is increased in a classroom with well balanced light. Child care centers must have access to generous amounts of natural light and be the primary means of lighting the classroom space. We strive to have natural lighting coming from at least two directions with classroom space facing south if possible, so that the maximum amount and warmth of light is available to the children during their day. A study has shown that students in classrooms with more natural light scored up to 25% higher on standardized tests than other students in the same school district. (Source: Study by Heschong Mahone Group, CA.)

Classrooms without adequate windows should have full spectrum, dimmable indirect lighting and a second source of task or specialized light for work areas. Indirect lighting produces reflected light, and children (who are at a far lower vantage point than adults) should not look directly into the light source, a condition which causes glare and eye fatigue. Task lights, such as those provided by residential type pendant fixtures, should be used for reading, painting, and close work. Consider using specialized lighting to display art work, pools of light to create excitement and variety, and high levels of light to encourage physical activity. In Infant rooms lighting should be, at least partially, of the indirect type (not typical office type) and should be capable of being dimmed.

To sum up, The Child Care Design Guide states: "Lighting is essential in child care centers. It is the hallmark of nurturing, quality environments for children."

## Making Your Website a Better Marketing Tool

They log on and click. That's how more and more of today's enrollment prospects are researching early care and education. Industry research has shown that the majority of users go online more for information than entertainment. This includes parents using the Internet to help them select centers they will call or visit with enrollment in mind. So how do you drive even more traffic to your website? And once visitors are there, how can your site be more effective at helping you generate inquiry calls and center enrollment visits?

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## Military Child Care Subsidy Update

### Operation Military Child Care – All Services Offer Subsidized Child Care

***Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood*** is a Department of Defense (DoD) program designed to meet the child care needs of Service Members living in areas where on-base military child care is not available. Eligible Service Members include Recruiting Specialists, Reserve Office Training Corps (ROTC) instructors, Military Entrance Processing (MEP) personnel and Service Members on independent duty assignments who cannot access the high quality care available on military installations. Also eligible are activated/deployed military parents in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

In the past, these families bore the full cost of their child care. Now with ***Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood***, many of them will be eligible to pay reduced fees for the care of their children. To meet this need, the DoD has asked the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) to partner with state and local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) to locate or develop high quality child care spaces that meet DoD quality standards, and provide fee assistance to lower the child care cost to military families. The civilian child care programs that provide ***Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood*** child care spaces are comparable in quality to Military operated on-base spaces and meet most DoD and Service standards.

The following are examples of programs that DoD considers quality care:

- ◆ Nationally accredited child care centers or FCC homes
- ◆ FCC homes with a CDA credentialed provider
- ◆ Federal or GSA accredited centers

#### **How to apply for Operation: Military Child Care reduced fee child care:**

Military members, spouses, or legal guardians can contact Child Care Aware toll-free at 1-800-424-2246 or via the web at [www.childcareaware.org](http://www.childcareaware.org).

## GSA and Coast Guard Partner for Affordable Care

The U.S. Coast Guard has started a pilot subsidy program in GSA centers in Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Washington, Oregon, Texas, and Louisiana. Coast Guard personnel can use accredited/soon to be accredited GSA centers and receive tuition assistance from the Coast Guard. The program will be administered in a manner similar to the current Army Partnership.

All questions on eligibility and application for the subsidy should be addressed to the GSA Heartland Finance Center, attention Judy Gonzalez, 816-823-4578. Any questions on enrollment, openings, and policies will be answered by the applicable child care center.

## Save the Date !

The 17th Annual GSA Child Care Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place, 2233 S. Martin Luther King Drive, Chicago, IL, August 1-3, 2006. We are looking for speakers from the Chicago area and Mid-America. Please send recommendations for speakers and topics to [nancy.norris@gsa.gov](mailto:nancy.norris@gsa.gov). Registration brochures will be mailed in the spring.

Visit our website at [www.gsa.gov/childcare](http://www.gsa.gov/childcare) for updates about the conference or contact Nancy Norris at 404.331.1851.



*Of the GSA centers eligible for NAEYC Accreditation, 85% are now accredited.*

*Congratulations to the following centers on their recent accreditation:*

- \*Penn Quarter, Washington, DC, managed by Georgetown Hill
- \*Fallon Federal Child Development Center, managed by Childtime

*Congratulations to the following centers on their recent re-accreditation:*

- \*Fingerprints, Washington, DC managed by Bright Horizons
- \*Uncle Sam's Academy for Tots, Kansas City, Kansas, managed by N2 Kids Enterprises, Inc



## Kinderplatz Child Care Center Highlighted in National Magazine

A satisfied parent from the Kinderplatz Child Care Center in Fort Snelling, MN was featured in the article, "Our 'perfect' nanny was a perfect nightmare" written by Kim Sundry, which appeared in the September 2005 issue of *Parents Magazine*:

Soon after Bobby was born we moved from New York to Boston, where I landed a job in public relations. We needed flexible child care, so we hired our friends' former nanny. I felt great about it - she came highly recommended - but soon, weird stuff started to happen. One night I came home to find her and Bobby playing with breakable dishes. Another time our doorman spotted her walking with Bobby in the middle of the street instead of the sidewalk.

Our nanny began complaining about my hours too. If I had to stay late, she'd come in late the next day, messing up my schedule.

After three months, my manager said, "You'd be such a great employee if you didn't have a baby. Children always get sick, and nannies always quit". What a remark! I'd had it with both him and our caregiver. As soon as the project I'd been working on was completed, I gave notice, fired the nanny, and stayed home.

A year later, we moved to Minneapolis, and my husband and I got new jobs. Because my hours would be more predictable, we decided to try a day-care center called Kinderplatz. It's incredible! Parents volunteer regularly. Bobby's made lots of friends, and he's even learning Spanish. All this, and the center costs less than our nanny did.

Before, if our nanny had a bad day, so did Bobby. Now he's never at the mercy of one person. I love the fact that I can pursue my career without worrying about him.

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To learn the answer go to the new **Marketing Exchange** feature on the ExchangeEveryDay website.

Here you can view the full tip sheet "Making Your Website a Better Marketing Tool." This tip sheet was prepared for *Exchange* by marketing guru, Julie Wassom, and is one of her monthly marketing features for *Exchange*.

You will also be invited to **submit your ideas** on how you are building enrollment despite a competitive environment around your early childhood program.

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You can log on to ExchangeEveryDay at [childcareexchange.com](http://childcareexchange.com)

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(For additional copies call 415-522-3472)

Contributions and Comments on Center News are welcome and encouraged.

Parents and center staff are encouraged to check the following website regularly: [www.recalls.gov](http://www.recalls.gov)